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## **Regional Integration Efforts and Political Cooperation of East African Community: A Case of Rwanda**

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# Regional Integration Efforts and Political Cooperation of East African Community: A Case of Rwanda

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## Abstract

The main purpose of the research was to assess the role of regional integration in political cooperation among EAC member states. The specific goals were to examine the effect of economic initiatives on political cooperation, to assess the effect of policy harmonization on EAC political cooperation in the case of Rwanda, and to investigate the relationship between diplomatic efforts and EAC political cooperation in the case of Rwanda. The study's insights on Rwanda-EAC dynamics foster stronger political collaboration, guiding EAC policy decisions. It informs Rwanda's diplomatic strategy, enhances cross-border cooperation within the EAC, and serves as a foundational resource for future research and policy recommendations. The study employs Institutional Liberalism Theory, Neo-Functionalism Theory, and Intergovernmentalism Theory to examine how international institutions, spill over effects, and intergovernmental decision-making shape regional integration and political cooperation within the EAC. The interview guide and questionnaire were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the field using a descriptive research design. Interviews were conducted with 30 respondents crossing the Gatuna Border using the convenient sampling technique. 68 respondents were selected from the ministry of foreign affairs based on a purposive sampling method to fill out the questionnaire from their respective offices, making 98 respondents out of 274 people in the target population. The results revealed that the evaluation of economic initiatives revealed strong support for their positive impact on EAC's political cooperation, reflected in high mean scores (4.886 to 4.989) and significant Pearson correlation coefficients (0.322 to 0.674,  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, policy harmonization demonstrated positive effects on political cooperation, evident in high mean scores (4.896 to 4.969) and strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.452 to 0.702,  $p < 0.01$ ). Effective diplomatic efforts were found to significantly foster political cooperation, indicated by high mean scores (4.824 to 4.958) and moderate to strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.245 to 0.914). In conclusion, these results underscore the pivotal roles of economic initiatives, policy harmonization, and diplomatic efforts in strengthening political collaboration within the EAC. The study suggests prioritizing continuous dialogue and mutual understanding among EAC diplomats, emphasizing policy harmonization and

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regional integration. Rwanda, as an EAC member state, should actively engage in integration efforts, while all member states should strive for collaborative decision-making and standardized policies. Citizens and leadership should support initiatives for economic growth and regional cooperation.

**Keywords:** *Regional Integration Efforts, Political Cooperation, East African Community, Rwanda*

**1. Introduction**

Despite the regional integration efforts by the government of Rwanda to become part of the EAC, poor political cooperation still manifests itself among some member countries, including Rwanda and others (Wangamati, 2015). While existing empirical studies have shed light on aspects of regional integration and political cooperation, there remain critical gaps in comprehending the intricate interplay between regional integration efforts and political cooperation and their wider implications (Schneider, 2017; Wohlmuth, 2017). This study endeavors to bridge these gaps by delving into the role of regional integration efforts in shaping political cooperation.

The research aims to explore how Rwanda's involvement in the EAC, spanning domains like educational reforms, gender equality advancements, initiatives in science and technology, and active participation in EAC forums, influences the realm of political collaboration (Oloo, 2016). Through this examination, the study seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which regional integration initiatives contribute to the development of shared political objectives among member states.

By scrutinizing Rwanda's experiences within the EAC, the study intends to offer a holistic and nuanced understanding of the dynamics between regional integration endeavors and the establishment of cooperative political frameworks. The anticipated findings hold the potential to provide valuable insights into the strategies and mechanisms that effectively foster political cohesion and shared goals within the context of regional integration efforts.

**1.1 Research Objectives**

**1.1 1.3.1 General objective**

The main objective is to evaluate the role of regional integration efforts in enhancing EAC state members' political cooperation through the case of Rwanda.

**1.3.2 Specific objectives**

- (i) To examine the role of regional economic initiatives in the political cooperation of the EAC with the case of Rwanda.
- (ii) To assess the effect of policy harmonization on political cooperation in the EAC with the case of Rwanda
- (iii) To find out the relationship between diplomatic efforts and political cooperation in the EAC with the case of Rwanda.

**1.4 Research hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Regional economic initiatives do not play a significant role in the promotion of political cooperation in the EAC, with a case of Rwanda.

**H02:** Policy harmonization does not have an effect on the political cooperation of the EAC

**H03:** Diplomatic efforts do not have a significant relationship with political cooperation of the EAC in the case of Rwanda.

**2.1 Empirical Review**

**2.1.1 Economic initiatives and political cooperation**

Wu et al. (2023) conducted an empirical study that examined the impact of intra-regional trade and investment on the green recovery of five Central Asian economies from 2010 to 2021, using annual data and the panel co-integration. The key findings revealed that increased green trade openness has a positive and significant effect on green economic recovery, with a 1% increase resulting in a 0.12% increase in green economic output in Central Asia. In contrast, a negative relationship was discovered between direct foreign investment and green recovery. Notably, patent-related factors have no significant impact on green recovery, whereas the official exchange rate is found to have a positive impact. The study also emphasizes the significance of financial development, demonstrating a positive and significant relationship between green recovery and financial development. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of green trade liberalism in promoting Central Asia's green economic recovery through increased green foreign investment, innovation, and environmentally friendly trade policies.

Blavasciunaite et al. (2020) conducted an empirical study on the relationship between trade balance and economic growth in the context of the EU 28 countries from 1998 to 2018. The research employs two primary approaches, one encompassing all trade balance periods and the other incorporating a deficit dummy variable for deficit periods, using the OLS method of multivariate regression analysis with fixed effects. The findings show that the trade balance has a consistent negative impact on economic growth, regardless of whether the country is in deficit or surplus. A 1% increase in the trade balance ratio, for example, corresponds to a 0.04 percent reduction in economic growth, with a slightly stronger effect over shorter timeframes. The study suggests potential non-linear effects during substantial trade deficits, meriting further investigation. It also encourages the consideration of factors like deficit size and permanence in future research. These findings underscore the significance of trade balance management for sustaining economic growth, offering valuable insights for policymakers.

Ntara (2023) study used interpretative phenomenology to investigate the role of political leadership in regional integration, using the EAC as a case study. Individuals from across the region representing member state governments, regional trade bodies, and private sector practitioners were interviewed. The study identifies poor political leadership as a significant impediment to the implementation of a common market within the EAC. The research proposes a variety of solutions, including revisiting the EAC decision-making model, implementing reconciliation and sanction mechanisms, increasing political will and commitment, re-evaluating the principle of variable geometry, promoting financial solidarity, optimizing member states' contributions, ensuring the independence of EAC institutions, combating corruption, and refining the EAC vision. C. The study recommends further research to explore the practical implementation of these solutions for the benefit of the region. Qualitative findings underscore the importance of political cooperation and financial self-sufficiency as crucial factors for successful common market implementation within the EAC.



## 2.1.2 Policy harmonization and political cooperation

Ndomondo-Sigonda et al. (2021) examined the impact of EAC's medicines regulatory harmonization on national agencies, using a mixed-method approach over 2010/11-2015/16. Key findings indicated that policy frameworks, collaboration, and harmonization were integral in enhancing trust and NMRA capacity. Notably, five EAC Partner States possessed comprehensive medicines laws, autonomous NMRAs, functional registration, and ISO 9001:2015 certification. The study emphasizes the initiative's significant contribution to medical product regulation capacity and proposes using its derived indicators for evaluating similar initiatives globally. This research offers valuable insights for public health policy development, highlighting the efficacy of regional cooperation in strengthening regulatory systems for better healthcare outcomes.

Rubanda et al. (2023) utilized pattern-matching to analyze tariff recourse policies in EAC nations, observing disparities in their implementation across domestic markets. The study recommends prioritizing market liberalization and competition growth to mitigate tariff-related disruptions, particularly in the electricity sector. It emphasizes the transient nature of such policies, emphasizing their role in addressing short-term market and welfare losses. Furthermore, the research advocates for the alignment of tariff recourse strategies with broader energy sector goals, including universal access and sustainable supply-induced growth. Specific examples, such as Tanzania's low-income household subsidies and Rwanda's budgetary support for affordable connections, underscore the diverse policy approaches within the EAC. This study sheds light on the importance of strategic policy formulation to ensure effective regional market integration and sustainable economic development.

Lwesya's (2022) empirical study examined EAC's integration into global value chains (GVCs) and its implications for economic upgrading, drawing on UNCTAD-Eora GVC Panel data from 2005 to 2018. Findings underscored Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda's relatively higher GVC integration levels via foreign and domestic value added channels. Notably, Kenya excelled in indirect value-added activities, emphasizing its upstream production focus. Despite these efforts, the study revealed EAC's predominantly low- and middle-value-added production activities, limiting regional competitiveness. The research highlighted the positive impact of domestic credit, foreign direct investment, institutional quality, and FVA on economic upgrading. To enhance competitiveness, the study proposed effective national and regional industrial policies, emphasizing innovation, human capital development, FDI attraction, and the resolution of market and coordination challenges within the region.

## 2.1.3 Diplomatic efforts and political cooperation

Karai Zanetti et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the understanding of health diplomacy among international diplomats and health policy-related professionals in the European Union (EU). Participants were chosen from various countries and practitioner categories, representing various levels of engagement in health diplomacy, using a heterogeneous stratified purposeful sampling approach. Key themes from nine conducted interviews were identified using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings indicate that participants had limited knowledge of the definition of Global Health Diplomacy (GHD) but were actively involved in daily activities and decisions within inter-governmental bodies. Awareness of specialized education and training for health attachés was lacking, leading to suggestions for enhancing GHD field and practice. The study emphasizes the critical role of

health diplomacy in connecting public health and foreign policy, as well as the growing importance of health in foreign policy. To improve global health agreements and international coordination, a clear career path for health attachés was recommended, promoting effective diplomacy while also protecting patients' rights.

The empirical study of Bogatyreva (2022) delved into the realm of humanitarian diplomacy, focusing on various aspects of this diplomatic practice. It examines the evolving concept of humanitarian diplomacy in the context of humanism 2.0 and the increasing prevalence of humanitarian negotiations and the creation of humanitarian spaces. The research explores the perspectives of foreign and Russian scholars on humanitarian diplomacy, dissecting its tools and drawing comparisons with traditional official diplomatic instruments. It underscores the significant political role played by non-state actors in humanitarian negotiations for resolving contemporary conflicts and acknowledges the United Nations' role in fostering partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The study also highlights the diverse national models of humanitarian diplomacy, elucidating the motivations behind states' engagement in this domain and identifying key directions. The study suggests that the humanitarian community should continue to explore innovative diplomatic approaches to address emerging challenges in humanitarian crises and armed conflicts.

Rhee et al. (2023) investigated the impact of perceived motives in public diplomacy on foreign public opinion using the psychological theory of insincerity aversion. The research employed a The study used a survey experiment to present divergent media frames about a genuine Russian medical donation to the United States during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic at when American citizens perceive Russia's donation as genuine, it can reduce their support for sanctions on Russia. However, when respondents were exposed to information suggesting political motivations behind Russia's donation, the positive effect on public opinion is nullified.

## 2.2 Research Gap

The research conducted by Wu et al. (2023), Blavasciunaite et al. (2020), Ntara (2023), and Lwesya (2022) offers valuable insights into various aspects of economic initiatives and policy harmonization within the contexts they examined. However, these studies primarily emphasize the economic dimensions of trade, investment, and regulatory alignment, leaving a research gap concerning the critical dependent variable of political cooperation. Specifically, they give less attention to the dynamics of political cooperation in terms of trade volume, political stability, and policy alignment within their respective regions.

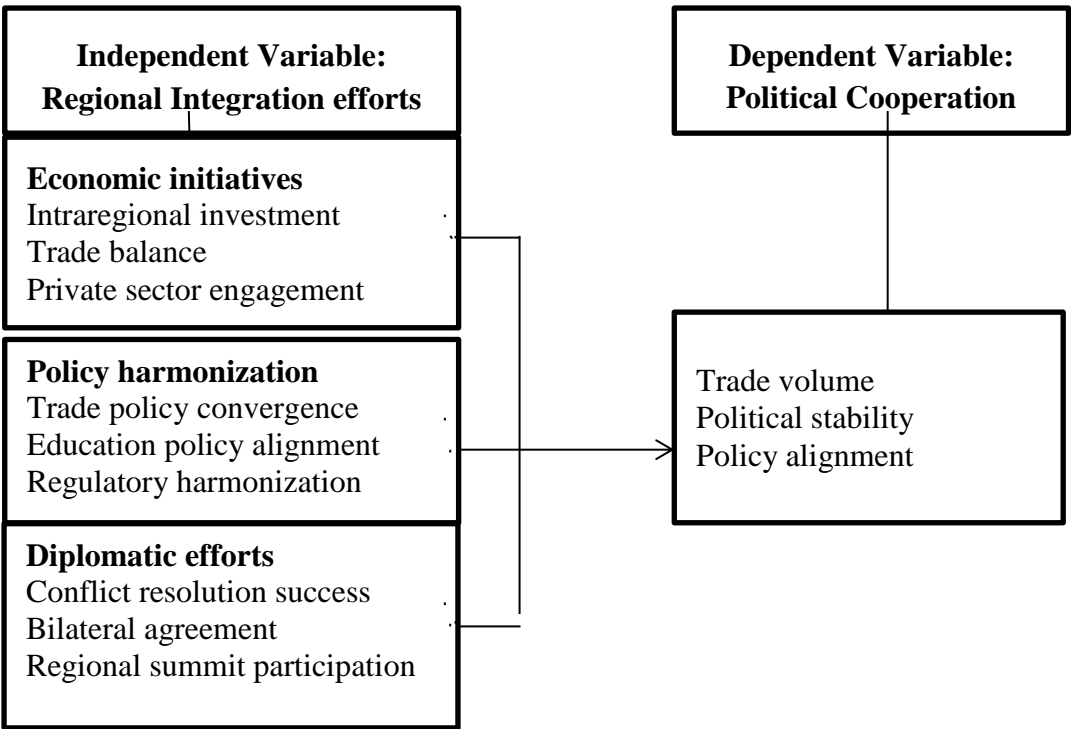
The empirical studies by Ndomondo-Sigonda et al. (2021), Rubanda et al. (2023), and Lwesya (2022) on EAC integration largely overlook crucial factors related to political cooperation within the region. One significant gap is the insufficient attention given to the impact of political stability on regional integration. Political stability is a key driver of cooperation among nations, and its absence can impede the effective implementation of harmonization initiatives, tariff policies, and economic upgrading efforts. Additionally, these studies do not delve into the influence of trade volume on political cooperation. The volume of trade between member states can act as both a catalyst for closer collaboration and a reflection of the extent to which political interests are aligned. Furthermore, there is limited exploration of policy alignment among EAC member states, which is essential for successful integration. Ignoring these factors leaves a notable void in understanding the broader context of regional integration's effects on political cooperation within the EAC.

In the context of studies on diplomacy by Karačić Zanetti et al. (2023), Bogatyreva (2022), and Rhee et al. (2023), the gaps related to political cooperation are evident as well. These studies do not adequately consider how political stability can influence the practice of diplomacy, especially health diplomacy within the EU. Moreover, the studies do not delve into the role of trade volume in shaping diplomatic relations, which is particularly relevant in the context of humanitarian diplomacy and public diplomacy. Lastly, policy alignment, a critical aspect of successful diplomacy, is not thoroughly examined in these studies. It is essential to recognize that diplomatic efforts can be deeply affected by the extent to which countries' policies align or diverge on key issues.

These gaps underscore the need for a more comprehensive assessment of how factors like political stability, trade volume, and policy alignment interact with regional integration to impact political cooperation, particularly in the context of diplomacy. Therefore, to bridge this research gap, the current research incorporates variables related to political cooperation, including trade volume, political stability, and policy alignment, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how economic and political factors interact within regional contexts. This approach would contribute to a more holistic analysis of the effect of economic initiatives, policy harmonization, and diplomatic efforts in promoting regional integration in EAC with a case of Rwanda.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is a visual structure that outlines the relationships and interactions between the key concepts, variables, and factors explored in a research study (DeMarco, 2023). It provides a visual representation of how these elements are interconnected and how they contribute to answering the research questions or objectives. In the context of the current study on regional integration efforts and political cooperation within EAC, the conceptual framework would help organize and guide this investigation as follows:



Source: Researcher, 2023

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.1 illustrates that the independent variable is regional integration efforts, which are measured by regional economic initiatives, policy harmonization, and diplomatic efforts, which may directly or indirectly influence the dependent variable which is the political cooperation of EAC member states and is measured by trade volume, policy alignment, and political stability. The figure also demonstrates the intervening variables that can also affect political cooperation if not well controlled which are geopolitical interests and economic interdependence.

**3. Materials and Methods**

The study utilized a descriptive research design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to depict the distribution and patterns of variables related to regional integration and political cooperation. The target population, comprising 274 individuals, included 30 Gatuna Border crossers and 244 Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees, selected to represent pertinent groups essential to the research (Ghosal et al., 2023).

The sample design encompassed a purposive sampling technique for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff (68 respondents) and a convenient sampling approach for the 30 Gatuna Border crossers, yielding a total of 98 participants. The data collection instruments included a questionnaire comprising five sections and a semi-structured interview guide, ensuring comprehensive data coverage. The procedures involved distributing questionnaires to Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees and conducting interviews with Gatuna Border crossers to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the research subject.

Reliability and validity were ensured through three pilot studies and the use of Cronbach Alpha, affirming the instruments' validity and reliability (Ghosal et al., 2023). Data analysis encompassed both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 23, incorporating mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis to examine the relationship between political cooperation and regional integration efforts. Thematic analysis was employed to identify qualitative findings that complemented or contradicted the quantitative results, enhancing the study's comprehensive evaluation. Ethical considerations were upheld, guaranteeing confidentiality, anonymity, and protection of respondents, with measures in place to prevent harm and maintain the integrity of the research process (Newman et al., 2021). The study's ethical conduct, respect, and professionalism were paramount throughout the data collection process.

**4.1 Presentation of findings**

**4.1.1 Economic initiatives and political cooperation**

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate how economic initiatives contribute to fostering political cooperation in the East African Community (EAC). It seeks to examine the interplay between key economic factors, including intraregional investment and trade, and essential political indicators such as stability and policy alignment within the EAC framework.



**Table 4. 1: Descriptive results of economic initiatives**

Statement	Mean	SD
Intraregional investment boosts EAC political cooperation.	4.948	0.364
Economic initiatives impact EAC political cooperation via trade balance.	4.886	0.643
Shared initiatives strengthen EAC political will and commitments.	4.979	0.142
Financial solidarity promotes EAC political cooperation.	4.938	0.376
Commitments to support communities bolster EAC political cooperation.	4.927	0.414
Private sector involvement affects EAC political cooperation	4.886	0.643
Overall mean	4.927	

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Table 4.1 presents the descriptive analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of economic initiatives on political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The results demonstrated a generally high mean score, ranging from 4.886 to 4.979, suggesting a significant inclination toward the view that various economic initiatives positively impact EAC's political cooperation. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.142 to 0.643, indicate a moderate level of dispersion around the mean for the different statements. Collectively, the results suggest a significant agreement among respondents regarding the positive effect of economic initiatives on political cooperation in the EAC.

**Table 4. 2: Descriptive results of political cooperation assessment in EAC**

Indicators	Mean	SD
Trade volume reflects EAC political cooperation.	4.866	0.588
EAC political stability boosts cooperation.	4.927	0.388
Policy alignment with EAC signals higher cooperation.	4.989	0.101
Trade enhances EAC political collaboration.	4.958	0.246
Stability promotes political cooperation.	4.927	0.414
Policy alignment fosters EAC cooperation.	4.927	0.438
Political cooperation involves diplomacy and shared goals within EAC	4.979	0.203
Overall mean	4.939	

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Table 4.2 delineates the descriptive findings on various indicators evaluating political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The results demonstrated consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.866 to 4.989, indicating a prevalent perception of substantial political cooperation. Standard deviations, varying from 0.101 to 0.588, suggest a moderate dispersion around the means. Overall, the results strongly imply a strong agreement among respondents regarding the presence of active political cooperation within the EAC, emphasizing the significance of trade, stability, and policy alignment in fostering political collaboration and cooperation in EAC.

**Table 4. 3: Correlation analysis between economic initiatives and political cooperation in EAC**

		Trade volume	Political stability	Policy alignment
Economic Initiatives	Pearson Correlation	.549**	.322**	.674**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000
	N	97	97	97

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

The correlation analysis in Table 4.3 revealed significant relationships between economic initiatives and political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The Pearson correlation coefficients, ranging from 0.322 to 0.674, suggest moderate to strong positive associations. The significance levels, all at  $p < 0.01$ , indicate a strong statistical significance, affirming the significant effect of economic initiatives on enhancing political cooperation within the EAC.

The interviewee number one said in his words: “Rwanda's active participation in EAC's economic initiatives, including the Common Market Protocol and joint infrastructure projects like the Rwanda Standard Gauge Railway and Rusumo Hydroelectric Power Station, have enhanced its political collaboration within the region. Notably, Rwanda's adherence to the Common Market Protocol has facilitated the smooth flow of goods, services, and skilled labor, nurturing trust among EAC nations. Despite occasional challenges stemming from economic development disparities and trade imbalances, Rwanda's commitment to these initiatives reflects its dedication to the shared economic and political objectives of the EAC. This active engagement has solidified Rwanda's position as a significant contributor to regional integration and the fostering of lasting political cooperation within the EAC”.

The qualitative results support the quantitative findings, illustrating how Rwanda's active involvement in specific EAC economic initiatives, such as the Common Market Protocol and infrastructure projects like the Rwanda Standard Gauge Railway and Rusumo Hydroelectric Power Station, aligns with the identified strong relationship between economic initiatives and political cooperation within the EAC. This qualitative evidence reinforces the notion that Rwanda's proactive engagement in these endeavours has indeed contributed to fostering political collaboration, substantiating the statistical results with concrete real-world examples. Hence, based on these results the  $H_{O1}$  is rejected

4.1.2 Policy harmonization and political cooperation

The second objective examined the significance of policy harmonization in promoting political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). It aimed to assess the agreement on how aligned policies, including trade and education standards, contribute to fostering collaboration and trust among EAC member states, emphasizing their role in regional integration.

Table 4. 4: Descriptive results of policy harmonization in EAC

Statement	Mean	SD
Trade policy harmonization affects EAC political cooperation.	4.907	0.541
Education policy alignment fosters EAC political cooperation.	4.969	0.226
Education standards unity enhances EAC collaboration.	4.938	0.428
Regulatory harmonization boosts EAC political cooperation.	4.958	0.285
Mutual recognition agreements build trust in the EAC.	4.917	0.513
Compliance ease in EAC promotes political cooperation.	4.896	0.603
EAC policy harmonization drives regional integration like political cohesion	4.969	0.226
Overall mean	4.936	

Source: Filed Data, 2023

Table 4.3 shows the descriptive results of policy harmonization's impact on political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The results revealed consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.896 to 4.969, indicating a widespread agreement on the positive influence of policy alignment on EAC's political cooperation. The moderate standard deviations, ranging from 0.226 to 0.603, suggest a notable degree of dispersion around the

means. Overall, the results underscore the crucial role of policy harmonization in fostering political collaboration and regional integration within the EAC.

**Table 4. 5: Correlation analysis between policy harmonization and political cooperation in EAC**

		Trade volume	Political stability	Policy alignment
Policy harmonization	Pearson Correlation	.702**	.452**	.560**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	97	97	97

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.5, the correlation analysis indicates strong associations between policy harmonization and political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The Pearson correlation coefficients, ranging from 0.452 to 0.702, signify strong positive relationships. With significance levels at  $p < 0.01$ , these results demonstrate the significant effect of policy harmonization in fostering and reinforcing political cooperation within the EAC.

In an interview with one of respondents who have been in the management of Private Sector Federation in Rwanda who is doing cross border trading, he mentioned in his own words: *"Policy harmonization in the EAC, notably in trade, customs, and investment, has strengthened cooperation. Challenges arise in sensitive areas like immigration and taxation due to differing national interests, occasionally causing tensions. Rwandan policymakers acknowledge the vital role of policy alignment for regional cooperation, emphasizing the necessity of compromise. Despite occasional strains from policy differences, Rwanda remains dedicated to fostering lasting integration within the EAC, demonstrating its commitment to collaborative progress and shared objectives."*

The qualitative results from the interview align with the quantitative findings, affirming the strong relationship between policy harmonization and political cooperation within the EAC. The interviewee's emphasis on successful harmonization in trade, customs, and investment corroborates the significant positive associations highlighted by the correlation analysis. Furthermore, the acknowledgment of challenges in sensitive areas resonates with the nuanced perspective presented in the quantitative results. Overall, the qualitative narrative supports the quantitative results, providing real-world context to the statistical evidence and reinforcing the link between policy harmonization and political cooperation within the EAC. Hence, based on these results the  $H_0$  is rejected.

**4.1.3 Diplomatic efforts and political cooperation**

The third objective investigated the role of diplomatic efforts in fostering political cooperation within the East African Community. It aims to assess the extent of agreement on how diplomatic efforts, including conflict resolution and bilateral agreements, contribute to reinforcing collaboration and trust among EAC states.

**Table 4. 6: Descriptive results of diplomatic efforts in EAC**

Statement	Mean	SD
Successful conflict resolution boosts EAC political cooperation.	4.948	0.334
Bilateral agreements enhance EAC political cooperation.	4.907	0.501
Regional summit participation fosters EAC political cooperation.	4.917	0.425
Diplomatic initiatives promote EAC political cooperation.	4.866	0.622
Effective diplomacy builds trust among EAC states.	4.958	0.406
Diplomatic efforts crucial for EAC political cohesion	4.958	0.246
Successful conflict resolution boosts EAC political cooperation.	4.824	0.677
Overall mean	4.911	

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Table 4.6 demonstrated the descriptive analysis of diplomatic efforts' effect on political cooperation within the East African Community. The results revealed a generally high mean score across all statements, ranging from 4.824 to 4.958, indicating a strong agreement regarding the crucial role of diplomatic efforts in fostering EAC's political cooperation. The standard deviations, varying from 0.246 to 0.677, suggest a moderate level of dispersion around the means. Overall, the results underscore the significance of successful diplomatic initiatives in promoting trust and political cooperation among EAC states.

**Table 4. 7: Correlation analysis between diplomatic efforts and political cooperation in EAC**

		Trade volume	EAC political	Policy alignment
Diplomatic efforts	Pearson Correlation	.325**	.245*	.914**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.016	.000
	N	97	97	97

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.7, the correlation analysis indicates significant relationships between diplomatic efforts and political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The Pearson correlation coefficients, ranging from 0.245 to 0.914, suggest moderate to strong positive associations. With significance levels at  $p < 0.05$ , these results highlight the crucial role of diplomatic efforts in facilitating and strengthening political cooperation within the EAC.

In an interview with a respondents who said he does business in almost all parts of EAC, she asserted in her own words: *"Diplomatic efforts, particularly seen at the Gatuna One-Stop Border Post and others like Kagitumba and Grande Barriere at Rubavu and Goma, have played a crucial role in enhancing political cooperation within the EAC. Through dialogue and compromise, trade disputes and border management issues have been effectively addressed, fostering deeper collaboration. Rwanda values diplomacy, actively engaging in EAC summits and bilateral talks, ultimately contributing to regional stability and integration despite persisting challenges."*

The qualitative results from the interview align with the quantitative findings, affirming the significant positive relationships between regional integration efforts and political cooperation within the EAC. The interviewee's emphasis on the critical role of diplomatic efforts at key border posts resonates with the statistical evidence highlighting the

interdependence between various factors, including diplomatic endeavours, regional integration, and political cooperation. The qualitative narrative provides real-world context to the statistical analysis, reinforcing the understanding that comprehensive efforts, including diplomacy, are crucial for fostering deeper collaboration and stability within the EAC. Hence, based on these results the  $H_{O3}$  is rejected.

**Table 4. 8: Correlation analysis between regional integration efforts and political cooperation in EAC**

		Trade volume	Political stability	Policy alignment
Economic initiatives	Pearson Correlation	.549**	.322**	.674**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000
	N	97	97	97
Policy harmonization	Pearson Correlation	.702**	.452**	.560**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	97	97	97
Diplomatic efforts	Pearson Correlation	.325**	.245*	.914
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.016	.000
	N	97	97	97

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.8, the correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between regional integration efforts and political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The Pearson correlation coefficients, ranging from 0.322 to 0.914, indicate moderate to strong positive associations. With all significance levels at  $p < 0.05$ , these findings underscore the critical interdependence between economic initiatives, policy harmonization, diplomatic efforts, and the advancement of regional integration, emphasizing their collective impact on fostering and reinforcing political cooperation within the EAC.

**4.1.4 Regression results**

The results of the regression analysis revealed the significant effects of regional integration efforts on key aspects within the East African Community (EAC). These findings highlighted the substantial effect of policy harmonization, diplomatic efforts, and economic initiatives on trade volume, political stability, and policy alignment, emphasizing their crucial roles in fostering cooperation and integration within the EAC.

**Table 4. 9: Model summary of regional integration efforts and trade volume in EAC**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.835 <sup>a</sup>	.697	.687	.32941

a. Predictors: (Constant), Policy harmonization, Diplomatic efforts, Economic initiatives

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

The model summary in Table 4.9 indicates a strong relationship between regional integration efforts and trade volume in the East African Community (EAC), as denoted by the R value of 0.835. The R-squared value of 0.697 suggests that 69.7% of the variability in trade volume can be explained by regional integration efforts. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.687 accounts for the number of predictors in the model. The standard error of the estimate at 0.32941 reflects the accuracy of the model's predictions. Hence, it demonstrates that regional integration efforts significantly influence and contribute to trade volume within the EAC.



**Table 4. 10: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of regional integration efforts and trade volume in EAC**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	23.166	3	7.722	71.162	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	10.092	93	.109		
Total	33.258	96			

a. Dependent Variable: Trade volume  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Policy harmonization, Diplomatic efforts, Economic initiatives  
**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.10, the ANOVA results indicate that the model's regression is statistically significant, as evidenced by the F-value of 71.162 at  $p < 0.001$ . The sum of squares for the regression is 23.166, with 3 degrees of freedom, resulting in a mean square of 7.722. This implies that the variation in trade volume can be largely attributed to regional integration efforts, specifically policy harmonization, diplomatic efforts, and economic initiatives within the EAC.

**Table 4. 11: Regression coefficients of regional integration efforts and trade volume in EAC**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.503	.843		.596	.552
Diplomatic efforts	.714	.197	.246	3.628	.000
Economic initiatives	-1.622	.206	-1.622	-7.878	.000
Policy harmonization	1.799	.164	2.147	10.957	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Trade volume  
**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.11, the regression coefficients revealed the effects of regional integration efforts on trade volume within the East African Community (EAC). The constant B of 0.503 suggests a negligible influence. Notably, diplomatic efforts ( $B = 0.714$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), economic initiatives ( $B = -1.622$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and policy harmonization ( $B = 1.799$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) display significant influences. These results imply that enhancing diplomatic efforts and policy harmonization while managing economic initiatives could positively influence trade volume within the EAC.

**Table 4. 12: Model summary of regional integration efforts and political stability in EAC**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.621 <sup>a</sup>	.386	.366	.30939

a. Predictors: (Constant), Policy harmonization, Diplomatic efforts, Economic initiatives  
**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.12, the model summary indicates a moderate relationship between regional integration efforts and political stability within the East African Community (EAC), represented by the R value of 0.621. The R-squared value of 0.386 implies that 38.6% of the variability in political stability can be explained by regional integration efforts. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.366 accounts for the number of predictors in the model. The standard

error of the estimate at 0.30939 reflects the accuracy of the model's predictions. This suggests that regional integration efforts have a significant yet moderate effect on political stability within the EAC.

**Table 4. 13: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of regional integration efforts and political stability in EAC**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.593	3	1.864	19.476	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	8.902	93	.096		
Total	14.495	96			

a. Dependent Variable: Political stability  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Policy harmonization, Diplomatic efforts, Economic initiatives

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.13, the ANOVA results reveal that the regression model is highly significant, as indicated by the F-value of 19.476 at  $p < 0.001$ . The sum of squares for the regression is 5.593, with 3 degrees of freedom, leading to a mean square of 1.864. This suggests that regional integration efforts, encompassing policy harmonization, diplomatic efforts, and economic initiatives, significantly influence and contribute to the variation in political stability within the EAC.

**Table 4. 14: Regression coefficients of regional integration efforts and political stability in EAC**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2.522	.792		3.184	.002
Diplomatic efforts	.500	.185	.261	2.704	.008
Economic initiatives	-1.002	.193	-1.518	-5.183	.000
Policy harmonization	.991	.154	1.792	6.429	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Political stability

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.14, the regression coefficients demonstrated the effects of regional integration efforts on political stability within the East African Community (EAC). The constant B of 2.522 implies a moderate influence. Notably, diplomatic efforts ( $B = 0.500$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) and policy harmonization ( $B = 0.991$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) exhibit positive impacts, while economic initiatives ( $B = -1.002$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) show a negative influence. These results suggest that strengthening diplomatic efforts and policy harmonization, while managing economic initiatives, could contribute to enhancing political stability within the EAC.

**Table 4. 15: Model summary of regional integration efforts and policy alignment in EAC**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.872 <sup>a</sup>	.761	.753	.05047

a. Predictors: (Constant), Policy harmonization, Diplomatic efforts, Economic initiatives

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.15, the model summary suggests a strong relationship between regional integration efforts and policy alignment within the East African Community (EAC), as denoted by the R

value of 0.872. The R-squared value of 0.761 implies that 76.1% of the variability in policy alignment can be explained by regional integration efforts. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.753 accounts for the number of predictors in the model. The standard error of the estimate at 0.05047 reflects the accuracy of the model's predictions. This indicates that regional integration efforts significantly effect and contribute to policy alignment within the EAC.

**Table 4. 16: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of regional integration efforts and policy alignment in EAC**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.753	3	.251	98.516	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	.237	93	.003		
Total	.990	96			

a. Dependent Variable: Policy alignment.  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Policy harmonization, Diplomatic efforts, Economic initiatives

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.15, the ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is highly significant, as illustrated by the F-value of 98.516 at  $p < 0.001$ . The sum of squares for the regression is 0.753, with 3 degrees of freedom, resulting in a mean square of 0.251. This implies that regional integration efforts, including policy harmonization, diplomatic efforts, and economic initiatives, significantly effect and contribute to the variability in policy alignment within the EAC.

**Table 4. 17: Regression coefficients of regional integration efforts and policy alignment in EAC**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5.474	.129		42.370	.000
Diplomatic efforts	-.286	.030	-.571	-9.473	.000
Economic initiatives	.381	.032	2.210	12.086	.000
Policy harmonization	-.190	.025	-1.311	-7.534	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Policy alignment

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

In Table 4.17, the Regression coefficients results illustrate the impact of regional integration efforts on policy alignment within the East African Community (EAC). The constant B of 5.474 implies a strong influence. Notably, diplomatic efforts ( $B = -0.286$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), economic initiatives ( $B = 0.381$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and policy harmonization ( $B = -0.190$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) demonstrate significant effects. These results suggest that managing diplomatic efforts, optimizing economic initiatives, and emphasizing policy harmonization could contribute to fostering enhanced policy alignment within the EAC.

**4.2 Discussion of findings**

The current results emphasized that economic initiatives have a positive and significant effect on political cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). This aligns with the findings of Blavasciunaite et al. (2020), highlighting the significant impact of trade balance management on economic growth. In contrast, Wu et al.'s (2023) research on Central Asia accentuates the positive influence of green trade liberalism on the region's green economic

recovery. While Ntara (2023) study underscored the importance of political will and commitment for successful regional integration, Wu et al. (2023) stressed the role of financial development in promoting green recovery. These collective findings signify the interconnectedness of economic and political dimensions in regional cooperation, urging policymakers to prioritize sustainable economic strategies alongside effective political leadership.

The current results revealed that policy harmonization has a positive and significant effect on political cooperation within the EAC as revealed by high mean scores (4.896 to 4.969) and strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.452 to 0.702,  $p < 0.01$ ). This aligns with the findings of Ndomondo-Sigonda et al. (2021) on the positive impact of harmonization on trust and capacity building, particularly in medicines regulation. Conversely, Rubanda et al. (2023) highlight disparities in tariff recourse policies and advocate for market liberalization, suggesting varied outcomes of policy harmonization efforts. Lwesya's study (2022) emphasizes the necessity of national and regional industrial policies for economic upgrading, complementing the current results by advocating a comprehensive approach to integration and growth within the EAC.

The current findings on diplomatic efforts within the EAC demonstrate their significant role in fostering political cooperation, evidenced by high mean scores (4.824 to 4.958) and moderate to strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.245 to 0.914). This aligns with Bogatyreva's (2022) exploration of humanitarian diplomacy, emphasizing the growing political role of non-state actors in humanitarian negotiations. Similarly, Rhee et al.'s study (2023) underlines the importance of sincerity in public diplomacy to influence foreign public opinion. In contrast, Karai Zanetti et al. (2023) highlight the lack of comprehensive knowledge of health diplomacy among professionals, suggesting the need for specialized education and training. These differences indicate the varying levels of understanding and implementation of diplomatic efforts, underscoring the complexities of effective political cooperation within regional and global contexts.

**5.1 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the first objective evaluation of economic initiatives revealed strong support for their positive effect on political cooperation within the EAC. The descriptive analysis and correlations both emphasized high mean scores (4.886 to 4.989) and significant Pearson correlation coefficients (0.322 to 0.674,  $p < 0.01$ ). This highlighted the essential role of economic factors in fostering political collaboration, underscoring the interdependence between economic initiatives and the EAC's political cooperation landscape.

Similarly, the second objective assessment of policy harmonization indicated widespread agreement on its favourable effect on political cooperation, as seen in the high mean scores (4.896 to 4.969) and strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.452 to 0.702,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings emphasized the significance of aligned policies in promoting trust and collaboration, supporting the notion that policy harmonization is a key driver for fostering political cooperation within the EAC.

In addition, the findings of third objective on diplomatic efforts emphasized their significant role in fostering political cooperation within the EAC. High mean scores (4.824 to 4.958) and moderate to strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.245 to 0.914) demonstrated the significant effect of effective diplomatic efforts. This, in conjunction with the positive correlations between regional integration efforts and political cooperation, highlighted the vital role of diplomatic efforts and regional integration in strengthening political cooperation among EAC member states.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, we recommend policymakers prioritize investments in women's education as a key strategy for post-conflict reconstruction. Education programs should be designed to empower women and align with broader reconstruction goals. Simultaneously, supporting income-generating activities through training and financial incentives can stimulate economic growth and entrepreneurship. Improved access to healthcare services, gender-based violence interventions, and thoughtful legal policy frameworks are also crucial. Prioritizing conflict resolution and prevention is essential to minimize conflict duration and enhance post-conflict reconstruction outcomes.

5.3 Acknowledgement

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends EAC diplomats prioritize dialogue and mutual understanding, while policymakers should focus on policies promoting regional integration and economic harmonization. The Government of Rwanda, as an EAC member, should actively engage in integration efforts. Member states should emphasize collaborative decision-making and standardized policies. Citizens should support integration initiatives, and EAC leadership and the private sector should collaborate to promote economic growth and policy harmonization, fostering community development and integration.

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